



Request for Proposal

For Website Design and Development

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation

September 6, 2016

To All Prospective Bidders:

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation works with public, private and nonprofit partners to create conditions for businesses in all sectors to thrive and improve the quality of life for our citizens by promoting the state's long-term economic health and prosperity.

Part of the Commerce Corporation's mandate is to promote tourism to the State of Rhode Island.

The purpose of this request for proposal (RFP) is to seek and acquire a qualified firm to develop and design a new destination website for Rhode Island under the same domain, www.VisitRhodeIsland.com.

Attached is a RFP to be filled out by those capable of meeting minimum requirements and carrying out the scope of work. All responses will be carefully reviewed and evaluated based on the criteria noted in the attached document. Any questions you may have to clarify this RFP are due to the Commerce Corporation no later than 2:00 p.m. ET on September 16, 2016.

Sincerely,

Lara Salamano
Chief Marketing Officer

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose and intent of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to establish a contract with a qualified firm to develop and design a new destination website for Rhode Island, replacing the current www.VisitRhodeIsland.com.

We live in an always-on world where everyone is connected to information and to one another. Our brand is being redefined by how users experience content across all channels. Services required are website redesign, website production, ongoing website support and search engine optimization. Additionally, we seek a firm that is able to develop a strategic approach to organizing content that inspires, informs and drives action. Additional services may include, but are not limited to, strategic planning, content marketing strategy, persona development, and mobile first user experience development.

This request is an offer by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (Commerce Corporation) to purchase, in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP, the services proposed by the successful Offeror(s), by contract, as needed.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Tourism is an important driver of the Rhode Island economy, contributing \$2.38 billion to its economy, supporting over 39,000 jobs and providing more than \$1 billion in wages and salaries in 2013.

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation is committed to growing the state's tourism industry through:

- Increasing traveler trips to Rhode Island
- Increasing average traveler spend per trip
- Increasing resident spend on tourism activities

The Commerce Corporation promotes Rhode Island in the domestic and international marketplaces leveraging multiple marketing and communications tactics, including but not limited to PR, advertising, social media, public engagement programs, group tours and sales outreach. All of these efforts direct our target audiences—prospective visitors, previous visitors, Rhode Island residents, transportation partners, tour operators, travel agents, industry partners and NGOs—to visit www.VisitRhodeIsland.com for more information.

To this end, Commerce Corporation requires development of a unique website that can support integrated marketing campaigns that embody the incredible diversity of Rhode Island as a destination and meet the needs of each of our audiences outlined above.

Key objectives are to create a positive user experience making it simple for site visitors to find and share information, elevate the level of engagement, increase the level of repeat visits, drive signups for e-newsletters, drive downloads for free visitor's guides and increase overall site

traffic. We hope to exceed industry standard metrics such as time spent on site, bookings via the site etc.

Prospective firms must factor in the complexities of standing out in the current marketplace and competing with other destinations. We want a website that is adaptable in an ever-evolving industry and provides innovative tools that will allow us to effectively compete in a mobile first world.

Proposals should include a review of the existing site, recommendations and a timeline for the best approach to converting the existing website into a new site. We are open to considering multiple options, including development phasing, if such alternative approaches will best allow us to complete the project in alignment with planned marketing campaigns, media buys and budget constraints.

Companies must demonstrate a proven history of strategic and effective travel and tourism-related website development. Companies must also have experience integrating best-of-breed technologies as part of a stack that will support online listening, audience development, email marketing, content management and site analytics.

Companies will be expected to work in collaboration with the Commerce Corporation's internal team and its agency partners that provide PR, marketing, creative services, media planning and buying, social media and public engagement support on tourism efforts.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Sept 6, 2016	RFP Posting
Sept 12, 2016, 10:00am ET	Pre-Bid Conference
Sept 16, 2016, 2:00pm ET	Questions and Notice of Intent to Bid (if not already submitted) due
Sept 21, 2016, 4:00pm ET	Questions & Answers Posted
Sept 28, 2016, 2:00pm ET	Proposals Due
Oct 5, 2016	3-5 Finalists Chosen
Week of Oct 10, 2016	Oral Presentation by Finalists
Oct 24, 2016	Selected Proposer Announced & Contract Negotiations Begin
Week of Nov 14, 2016	Start Date

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Offeror shall provide a proposal, in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth herein, to provide website design, development and ongoing maintenance services to the Commerce Corporation that may include, but are not limited to:

- Development of a project plan, including timeline, for the entire scope of work with input from internal team
- Development of strategic plan for organizing content around experiences that inspire, inform and drive action. This includes development of personas for target audience segments and use these personas to further define site experiences and desired content
- Redesign of www.VisitRhodeIsland.com to create a delightful and uncomplicated experience that includes (but is not limited to) the following features, elements and functionality:
 - **Intuitive and Attractive Design**
 - Clean, contemporary design and flow
 - Easy and intuitive navigation that does not require multiple clicks to reach a desired page
 - Mobile responsive web design
 - Balance between simplicity and relevant information
 - Support high-resolution media (images and video)
 - Consistent use of Rhode Island's brand style guide
 - Consumer experience-led user interface that groups and presents information in a logical manner and requires no more than three levels of "scrolling" for the user to find desired information
 - Fast-loading pages designed with a balance of text and graphics such that each page loads in 4 seconds or less on the average computer
 - **Content Management Strategy**
 - An open-source content management system that is instinctive, easy to use, supports the features and functionality outlined below, and can be updated easily by the internal website administrator (includes providing recommendations for non-proprietary CMS software)

- Portal- An interactive tool the provides industry partners and event producers the ability to supply and update content to administrator for approval and posting.
- A blog platform that provides ability for administrator to review and approve posts from guest writers
- o **Social Media Strategy**
 - Helpful, engaging and shareable content
 - Social sharing tools that allow visitors to post on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, etc. should be incorporated across the website
 - Social followership tools that encourage site visitors to engage with Rhode Island tourism on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube
 - Integration of social media feeds, (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest,) within the homepage and other key pages, including hashtag strategy
 - Social media API login functionality to make it easy for users to save their trips and create accounts on the website
- o **Travel and Tourism Features and Functionality**
 - Digital itinerary builder and sample itineraries, including functionality that makes it easy for users to save their trip plans and share them
 - Integration of existing and new third-party feeds, including but not limited to restaurants, hotels, attractions, site reviews and other listings from third-party vendors, including potential tourism regional partners
 - Interactive destination maps that enable a user to search by region or by interest category (e.g., landmarks, blueways and greenways, cycling trails)
 - Events calendar, including the option for site users to upload events and options for sorting the calendar by date, location, type of event, etc.
- o **Customer Engagement Strategy**
 - E-newsletter signup
 - Ability to upload photos for approval by site admin and ability to remove photos that violate terms of service

- Content hub for downloadable materials including but not limited to free visitor's guides, brochures, maps, infographics, etc.
- Contact us forms
- News media hub
- o **Other key requirements and considerations include:**
 - Image rich with use of captivating photos and videos
 - Can display changing photographs and video content on the homepage and other landing pages
 - Has functionality to support slideshows and carousels
 - Meets ADA standards of compliance
 - Displays correctly in all major browsers
 - Displays time-sensitive, accessible information (e.g., Top 10 experiences, partner deals) on the home page and other landing pages
 - Integrates with multimedia marketing campaigns, including paid media, native advertising, social media advertising, online and onsite activations and public engagement programs
 - Considers SEO as part of website design, development and maintenance
 - Utilizes best-in-class search functionality
 - Features a detailed website map in the footer
 - Employs analytics integration including visitor trends, page views, web traffic analysis, path analysis, entry and exit pages, length of stay, browsers, platforms, as well as gathering email, areas of interest and demographics information in a format that permits Commerce Corporation to maintain a single database of users and email each according to area of interest and profile
 - Able to provide multi-language support, if needed
 - Capability to integrate booking functionality
 - Website must be safe and secure using HTTPS
 - Design and CMS must allow for easy changes to site navigation, images, listings and overall content

- Development and implementation
 - o Build the website based on the approved design
 - o Migrate existing content and images
 - o Create and build appropriate content as needed, including integration of new photos and videos
 - o Develop any and all templates needed for staff to easily update web content
 - o Collaborate with Commerce Corporation's internal team and agency partners to ensure alignment with planned integrated marketing campaign efforts
 - o Complete all other work necessary to develop and fully test the website
 - o Ensure website is fully operational
 - o Conduct consumer user testing prior to launch
- Training: Provide CMS training to a minimum of three team members
- One-year support: Provide one year of website support, CMS maintenance from the date the new website is live, including performance and load testing to ensure that the website meets predefined performance and load testing metrics
- Long-term proposal: Provide a proposal for website support, CMS updates and maintenance as well as SEO beyond year one
- Hosting recommendation: Provide suggestions on the best website hosting opportunity, either third-party or with your company
- Other: Any other additional items not listed above, to provide a fully operational website

Commerce Corporation will:

- Deliver content for integration into new site
- Maintain current URL address

PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Offeror will provide Commerce Corporation with consulting services as mutually agreed upon and described in a Statement of Work, which will govern any particular assignment that is engaged under this RFP.

The statement of work (SOW) shall be drafted as an engagement letter between the parties setting forth the following:

- A complete and detailed description of the type(s) of services to be rendered by the Offeror
- The applicable billing rates for the services to be rendered (“Service Fees”)
- Any additional terms and conditions to which the parties may agree

Offerors will submit their proposals within the timeframe indicated.

No extension in the submittal date will be granted on an individual basis. If Commerce Corporation determines that the timeframe it has established for this RFP is inadequate, it may, at its option, extend the submission deadline for all Offerors.

Offerors agree that their proposals are a firm agreement to provide services at a stipulated rate to the Commerce Corporation. Those rates will be reflected in the Statement of Work engagement letter. All pricing schedules quoted in response to this RFP, however, must remain in effect for the duration of the contract if awarded.

Offeror may withdraw their proposal at any time by notifying Commerce Corporation in writing of their intention to do so.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Commerce Corporation is committed to selecting the most competitive offer. Our evaluation will be geared to identify those proposals that offer the best combination of expertise and value, considering the following:

1. Understanding and provision of all items requested in the RFP
2. Demonstrated prior experience developing and implementing strategic websites in the travel and tourism sector; proposed team experience
3. Quality, creativity and relevance of tour and travel samples provided
4. Suitability for project—current work load, staff size, references and a demonstrated effectiveness with similar projects
5. Budget approach

Commerce Corporation will not, however, base its evaluation solely on price and reserves the right to make an award to an Offeror who may not necessarily be the lowest bidder.

- Commerce Corporation reserves the right to award all, partial or none of this solicitation.
- Travel and travel reimbursement is not authorized for this acquisition.

Offeror shall have the capability, experience, and expertise to provide the Commerce Corporation with services in accordance with the requirements set forth herein and consistent with the representations made in the submission under this RFP.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Commerce Corporation will not provide any reimbursement for any cost associated with the development or presentation of a proposal.

Failure to include any of the following information may have an adverse impact on the evaluation of a proposal:

- Offeror should complete all of the components of the Evaluation and Selection Criteria. Offeror should respond to the main themes of each of the outlined Evaluation and Selection Criteria in a comprehensive, yet succinct, narrative that addresses the Commerce Corporation's core needs as outlined above. Offeror should provide corresponding examples, sample work products or references when asked to do so. The Selection Committee may request additional detailed responses to individual questions during a possible oral presentation.
- Inclusion of client information or references that reflect upon the Offeror's consulting expertise or experience is desirable.
- Table of contents and an executive summary of the proposal should be included.
- A fee schedule for work proposed under the RFP should be included.

COMPANY DETAILS

- Company name and parent company name
- Ownership structure
- Years in operation
- Mailing address (headquarters)
- Other office location(s)
- Primary phone
- Fax number
- Website and blog URL
- Primary point of contact (name, title, phone and email address)
- Bios of primary team members who would be engaged in this project
- Total number of employees
- Comprehensive pricing and/or rate sheet for all potential services you might provide under this RFP should you be selected as a service provider

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- Certification that there are no conflicts of interest between any existing contracts. Client relationships that could potentially be a conflict of interest must be listed together with a discussion of how you will resolve the potential conflict of interest. The respondent cannot currently be working with any state tourism offices in the Northeast region, including the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maine, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont and New Hampshire.

REFERENCES

- Three references for travel and tourism-related web development work including: company name, primary client name, contact details and brief explanation of services provided

CAPABILITIES & EXPERIENCE

- Provide an overview of services and capabilities
- Address key resources applicable to the project described in this RFP (e.g., work completed in-house or outsourced, access to software or other technology, etc.)
- List relevant experience with travel and tourism-related web design
- What percentage of business is tourism related
- List awards/accolades and special certifications
- Provide three case studies of your work that resulted in a web development initiative and the results achieved using the categories below to guide your case study.

APPROACH TO PROJECT

- What is your approach to understanding a new client's business and beginning work on a new account?
- Explain your methodology and planning process for website development
- Detail the technical requirements and systematic implementation needed
- Provide numbers of revisions included
- How do you typically measure the results and successes of your web development? Please provide examples and outline analytical metrics that will be integrated into the website
- Outline what content will be needed (multimedia and text)

- What key areas of focus would you recommend for the redevelopment and improvement of www.VisitRhodeIsland.com
- Detail project management from your agency
- Timeline to complete project
- Detailed budget

NOTIFICATIONS:

- Equal Employment Opportunity (RIGL 28-5.1) – 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy – (a)Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island State government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of State employment. This policy applies to all areas where the State dollar is spent, in employment, public services, grants and financial assistance, and in State licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Opportunity Office at (401) 222-3090.
- In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.1 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation, a corporation without a Rhode Island business address, shall have the right to transact business in the State until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). **This is a requirement only of the successful contractor.**

ADMINISTRATIVE PROPOSAL ELEMENTS

1. Acknowledgement of the Conflict of Interest Affidavit requirements under RI General Laws 36-14-6.
2. Acknowledgement that a Certificate of Good Standing from the Rhode Island Division of Taxation will be delivered to the Corporation upon award.
3. A listing of all current and on-going contracts.
4. A disclosure of all outstanding financial obligations with the State of Rhode Island.
5. The Commerce Corporation will not provide any reimbursement for any cost associated with the development or presentation of a proposal.

RFP LOGISTICS

RFP Deadline

Bids shall contain fifteen (15) printed copies and one (1) digital (PDF) copy on a thumb drive and must be in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Attn: Website Design & Development RFP". One of the fifteen (15) copies may contain a cover page stamped as a PUBLIC COPY, for which copy the bidder can redact any trade secrets, commercial or financial information, or other information the bidder deems not subject to public disclosure pursuant to chapter 38-2, the Access to Public Records Act. All other copies shall not be redacted in any manner.

All sealed bids must be delivered to the Corporation to be stamped "received" no later than **2:00pm ET on Wednesday, September 28, 2016**, at the following address:

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Attn: Website Design and Development RFP
315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101
Providence, RI 02908

All sealed bids will be opened on Wednesday, September 28, 2016, at 3:00pm ET at the offices of the Commerce Corporation at the address above. All documents submitted in response to this bid proposal are deemed public pursuant to Chapter 38-2 and will be available for public inspection upon opening of the bids unless the bidder submits a PUBLIC COPY. In such case, the PUBLIC COPY shall be made available as a public record at bid opening. The burden to identify and withhold from the PUBLIC COPY released at the bid opening any trade secrets, commercial or financial information, or other information the bidder deems not subject to public disclosure pursuant to chapter 38-2, the Access to Public Records Act, shall rest with the bidder submitting the bid proposal. Upon award in connection with this procurement, all bids shall be deemed public records as provided under RIGL § 37-2-18(g), notwithstanding any redactions made by a bidder in its PUBLIC COPY, and the Commerce Corporation shall be free to review and release such documentation as it deems appropriate under the Access to Public Records Act. By submitting a bid to the Commerce Corporation in response to this solicitation, the bidder waives any right to seek damages or recompense of any kind or nature relating to or arising out of release of any document, communication, record or information provided to the Commerce Corporation in connection with this solicitation and consents to the release of such documents, communications, records or information as the Commerce Corporation may deem appropriate in its sole discretion.

A final contract will not be awarded at the opening of the bids.

Note: No phone calls. Late responses will not be accepted, and responses received via electronic submission only will be disqualified.

Pre-Bid Conference

There will be an optional pre-bid Conference on Monday, September 12, 2016, at 10:00am ET at the Commerce Corporation office located at 315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101, Providence, RI 02908.

Questions & Answers

Questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP should be directed by e-mail to marketing@commerceri.com no later than 2:00pm ET on Friday, September 16, 2016. Responses to questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP will be posted online via addendum at www.commerceri.com and www.purchasing.ri.gov by 4:00pm ET on Wednesday, September 21, 2016, to ensure equal awareness of important facts and details. Questions will not be considered unless submitted in writing as directed.

Intent to Bid

If your company plans to submit a bid, please send an email by 2:00 p.m. ET on September 16, 2016, to marketing@commerceri.com. If your agency decides not to participate, please still send an email to marketing within the same timeframe and, if you're willing, let us know why you aren't participating.

The Commerce Corporation reserves the right to terminate this solicitation prior to entering into any agreement with any qualified firm pursuant to this Request for Proposal, and by responding hereto, no firms are vested with any rights in any way whatsoever.

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all bids for not complying with the terms of the request for proposal. Commerce Corporation also reserves the right to negotiate with the selected bidder in the event that the lowest responsive and responsible bid price exceeds available funds. Any bid may be withdrawn prior to the above scheduled time for the opening of bids or authorized postponement thereof. Any bid received after the time and date specified shall not be considered. No bidder may withdraw a bid within sixty (60) days after the actual date of the opening thereof.